

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 925

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION FORMAL OPENING

REF: (A) BELFAST 156 (B) BELFAST 116

1. ELECTED MEMBERS NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION MET AT STORMONT FOR FORTY ONE MUNITES MAY 8 AND ADJOURNED TO MAY 22. INTER-PARTY COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF SEVEN LOYALISTS AND FIVE OTHERS HEADED BY IAN PAISLEY ESTABLISHED TO DRAW UP RULES OF PROCEDURE BEFORE MAY 22. ALL CONVENTION MEMBERS EXCEPT WILLIAM CRAIG AND GLENN BARR REGISTERED AND ARE ELIGIBLE RECEIVE SALARY. CRAIG WAS AT WESTMINISTER AND BARR REFUSED TO REGISTER. BARR THREATENED BOYCOTT ASSEMBLY UNTIL SECSTATE REES TRANSFERS FOUR LOYALIST TERRORISTS HELD IN SCOTTISH JAILS TO NORTHERN IRELAND JAILS AS HAS BEEN DONE WITH SOME REPUBLICAN TERRORISTS.

2. CONSTITUTIONAL CHAIRMAN SIR ROBERT LOWRY OPENED MEETING BY READING GOODWILL MESSAGE FROM SECSTATE REES AND ADDING OWN PLEA TO MEMBERS TO MAKE CONVENTION A SUCCESS. UNIONIST HARRY WEST SPEAKING ON BEHALF MAJORITY AFFIRMED THAT ALL DEDICATED TO MAKING CONVENTION REAL SUCCESS, ASSURED THAT UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION (UUUC) WOULD NOT USE POSITION "TO KICK THE MINORITY AROUND," EXPRESSED INTENT WORK IN UNCLASSIFIED

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PARTNERSHIP IN MANY MATTERS THAT CONCERN WELFARE PEOPLE

"EVEN WITH THOSE WHO HOLD SENTIMENTS AND HOPES OF UNITED IRELAND" BUT REITERATED UUUC "NOT GOING TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALLOWING THE HAND OF SUCH A PERSON TO BE LAID ON ACTUAL STEERING WHEEL OF STATE." SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY LEADER M.P. GERRY FITT IN FORMAL REMARKS NOTED WEST HAD REFERRED TO POWER-SHARING AND PARTICIPATION WHICH INCLUDES IN GREEN PAPERS BUT HAD OMITTED MENTION OF IRISH DIMENSION WHICH ALSO INCLUDED. FITT SAID LONG RANGE GOVERNING FROM OUTSIDE UNDESIRABLE. HE CALLED FOR RECOGNITION DEEP DIVISIONS FIRST AND THEN EFFORTS BY BOTH SECTIONS DIVIDED COMMUNITY TO SOLVE THEM. ERADICATION OF VIOLENCE FROM ISLAND REQUIRES COOPERATION WITH ADJACENT GOVERNMENTS AND AUTHORITIES HE SAID.

3. ATMOSPHERE AT CONVENTION GENERALLY MOST CORDIAL AND DIGNIFIED. EXCEPTION WAS BARR THEATRICS DESCRIBED ABOVE. PROBABLY PARTIALLY BECAUSE POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE BEEN STRESSING INTENT MAKING CONVENTION SUCCESS, PRESS COVERAGE LESS PESSIMISTIC THAN IMMEDIATELY AFTER ELECTION (REFTEL A). SOME OBSERVERS SPECULATING THAT BILL OF RIGHTS AND POLICING PROBLEM CAN BE DISCUSSED BEFORE CONVENTION MEETS ISSUE POWER-SHARING.

4. PROVISIONAL IRA WEIGHED IN WITH STATEMENT MAY 8 TO EFFECT THAT AS ORGANIZATION THAT SMASHED STORMONT, PROVISIONALS WILL NOT TOLERATE ITS REEMERGENCE UNDER ANY GUISE WHATEVER. STATEMENT CLAIMED U.U.C. REPRESENTED ONLY ONE THIRD NORTHERN IRELAND ELECTORATE AND WOULD FACE FULL STRENGTH IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY IN ANY ATTEMPT ESTABLISH SIX COUNTY FASCIST STATE. IT BEGAN PROVISIONAL STATEMENT FOLLOWED IMPORTANT MEETING ATTENDED BY NORTHERN MEMBERS PROVISIONAL SINK FEIN AND THAT ONE INTERPRETATION IS THAT THEY HAVE DECIDED MAINTAIN CEASEFIRE FOR A TIME (REFTEL B).

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